

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A distributed entertainment system comprising:
2 at least one entertainment unit coupled to a wide area network (WAN), the at least one
3 entertainment unit comprising,
4 a user interface, comprising at least one graphical user interface (GUI);
5 a local memory device that stores entertainment content comprising music;
6 a peripheral interface; and
7 a user input device; and
8 a plurality of peripheral devices coupled to the at least one entertainment unit via the
9 peripheral interface, wherein a user, through the user input device and the user interface, performs at
10 least one activity from a group comprising,
11 playing music;
12 playing electronic games;
13 viewing television content; and
14 browsing the Internet.

1 2. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, wherein multiple entertainment units
2 are coupled to another via a local area network (LAN), and wherein one of the multiple
3 entertainment units is coupled to the WAN.

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3. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, wherein multiple entertainment units
are coupled to another via a local area network (LAN), and wherein each of the multiple
entertainment units is coupled to the WAN.

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4. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, wherein the at least one
entertainment unit further comprises an infrared (IR) receiver/transmitter for transferring data and
commands from the at least one entertainment unit and for receiving data and commands in the at
least one entertainment unit.

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5. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of peripheral
devices comprises:

- at least one user identification (ID) device selected from a group comprising,
 - a thumbprint recognition device; and
 - a facial recognition device;
- a video unit comprising hardware and software for capturing and processing images; and
- at least one payment device selected from a group comprising,
 - a coin acceptor;
 - a bill acceptor; and
 - a credit card/smart card reader.

6. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, wherein the at least one entertainment unit further comprises an audio unit comprising audio speakers and hardware and software for playing music.

7. The distributed entertainment system of claim 1, further comprising a central management resource coupled to the at least one entertainment unit via the WAN, the central management resource comprising:

- a management module that performs administrative functions;
- a monitoring module that monitors system components and collects and stores data related to system usage;
- a content storage module comprising stored entertainment content; and
- a content delivery module that controls delivery of entertainment content from the content storage module to an the at least one entertainment unit.

8. The distributed entertainment system of claim 7, wherein the central management resource further comprises:

- master content management logic that manages entertainment content in the at least one entertainment unit;
- a master activity log that stores data regarding activity of the at least one entertainment unit;
- a master music information database that stores a master list of music available to the at least one entertainment unit;

8 a master game database that stores information about games available to the at least one
9 entertainment unit;

10 a master attract loop database that stores attract loops available to the at least one
11 entertainment unit, wherein each of the attract loops comprise electronic data that may be displayed
12 to show advertisements and activities that are available on the at least one entertainment unit; and
13 a user database that stores information relating to previously established user accounts.

9. The distributed entertainment system of claim 8, further comprising a content
processing module comprising:

recorded media comprising music data recorded in an electronic format on a medium;

digital encoding hardware and software coupled to the recorded media that receives the
music data, and digitally encodes the music to produce digitally encoded music data;

an intermediate storage device coupled to the digital encoding hardware that receives and
stores the digitally encoded music data;

compression hardware and software coupled to the intermediate storage device, wherein the
compression hardware and software receives the digitally encoded music data, and compresses the
digitally encoded music data.

10. The distributed entertainment system of claim 9, wherein the music data includes
music identifying information, music files, and album art.

11. A network entertainment unit comprising:

2 a local area network (LAN) interface through which the network entertainment unit may
3 communicate with similar network entertainment units in a venue;
4 a wide area network (WAN) interface through which the network entertainment unit may
5 communicate with a central management resource remote from the venue;
6 a user interface, comprising at least one graphical user interface (GUI);
7 a local memory device that stores entertainment content comprising music;
8 a peripheral interface; and
9 a user input device, wherein a user, through the user input device and the user interface,
10 performs at least one activity from a group comprising,
11 playing music;
12 playing electronic games; and
13 browsing the Internet.

1 12. The network entertainment unit of claim 11, further comprising an infrared (IR)
2 receiver/transmitter for transferring data and commands from the entertainment unit and for
3 receiving data and commands in the entertainment unit.

1 13. The network entertainment unit of claim 11, further comprising a plurality of
2 peripheral devices coupled to the network entertainment unit, the plurality of peripheral devices
3 comprising:
4 at least one user identification (ID) device selected from a group comprising,
5 a thumbprint recognition device; and

6 a facial recognition device;
7 a video unit comprising hardware and software for capturing and processing images; and
8 at least one payment device selected from a group comprising,
9 a coin acceptor;
10 a bill acceptor; and
11 a credit card/smart card reader.

1 14. The network entertainment unit of claim 11, further comprising an audio unit
2 comprising audio speakers and hardware and software for playing music.

1 15. The network entertainment unit of claim 11, wherein the at least one GUI comprises:
2 a music selection GUI through which the user may choose music from a master list at the
3 central management resource to be played in the venue, wherein it is not required that the selected
4 music is among the entertainment content stored on the local memory device; and
5 a game selection GUI through which the user may choose games from a master list at the
6 central management resource to be played in the venue, wherein it is not required that the selected
7 games be among the entertainment content stored on the local memory device.

1 16. A method for electronic entertainment, comprising:
2 at an entertainment unit in a venue, receiving a request for an item of entertainment content
3 from a user;

4 supplying the requested entertainment content from a memory device on the entertainment
5 unit, or if the requested entertainment content is not available on the memory device of the
6 entertainment unit;

7 transmitting the request via a local area network (LAN) to a different entertainment unit in
8 the venue;

9 supplying the requested entertainment content from a memory device on the different
10 entertainment unit, or if the requested entertainment content is not available on the memory device
11 of the different entertainment unit;

12 transmitting the request via a wide area network (WAN) to a central management resource
13 remote from the venue; and

14 supplying the requested entertainment content from a memory device on the central
15 management resource, wherein the entertainment content comprises music and electronic games.

1 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

2 at the entertainment unit in the venue, receiving an input indicating an identity of the user;
3 accessing a user account with the identity of the user; and
4 charging the user account for supplied entertainment content.

1 18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

2 receiving a request to purchase products available at the venue; and
3 charging the user account for any requested products that are supplied to the user.

1 19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
2 at the entertainment unit, querying the user whether the user wishes to establish an identity;
3 receiving an input from the user indicating the identity of the user;
4 converting the input to a user identity;
5 receiving charge account information from the user; and
6 associating the user identity with the charge account information, wherein the input is
7 selected from a group comprising.
8 an alphanumeric identification;
9 a thumbprint; and
10 a facial image.

1 20. The method of claim 16, further comprising receiving a request from the user to
2 browse the World Wide Web (web) and in response, giving the user access to the web at the
3 entertainment unit.

1 21. The method of claim 16, further comprising maintaining an activity log that stores a
2 record of activity on the entertainment unit, wherein the activity comprises requests and purchases
3 by the user.

1 22. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
2 displaying to the user a list of available music, including graphical images;

3 receiving an indication from the user that the user wishes to purchase selected music from the
4 list; and
5 automatically accessing a web site that offers the selected music for sale.

1 23. The method of claim 22, further comprising downloading the selected music from the
2 entertainment unit to a mobile user device using a wireless communication method.

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